11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[post-world war II period]

matter from events in French West Africa and the rest of Overseas France. All projects undertaken in the Upper Volta became of interest to the other units of the French Union because the funds to support them had to be voted on by representatives of the whole, including not only local Mossi and non-Mossi, but also Africans in other territories, French colonial populations outside Africa, and the metropolitan French.

The conditions that were to have the greatest effect on the position of Mossi chiefs were created in January 1949, when elections were held to choose the Upper Volta's first General Council. The major parties involved in the election were the Mossi-dominated Union Voltaïque; the Entente Voltaïque, a local section of the RDA representing the interests of such non-Mossi populations as the Lobi, Fulani, Bobo, Senufo, and Gurunsi; and a group of smaller ethnic parties such as the Union Lobie and the Indépendants. The campaign reflected all the tensions and conflicts prevalent among the administration, the RDA, the non-Mossi parties, and the Union Voltaïque. Both the Union Lobie and the Indépendants spoke out against what they feared to be Mossi domination, and accused the Mossi chiefs of "neo-feudalism." The Union Voltaïque accused the RDA of radicalism, of associating with communists, and of hostility to the chiefs. It cited as evidence the deposal of several Agni and Senufo chiefs in the Ivory Coast by partisans of the RDA. The RDA, in turn, charged the Union Voltaïque with supporting reactionary, feudal-minded chiefs, and thus with opposing the true interests of the Mossi and other Voltaic peoples. Furthermore, it accused Masson (Governor Mouragues's executive officer) of encouraging the cercle commanders to fight against the RDA, and of jailing about 300 RDA members at Bobo-Dioulasso.[23]

As expected, the Union Voltaïque won most of the seats in the more populous Mossi section of the Upper Volta, and thus was able to dominate the political institutions created by the administration. Nevertheless, the election produced deep political scars in the Upper Volta, and lasting enmity between the RDA and the Mossi chiefs.

During the years that followed the reunification of the Upper Volta, the Mossi chiefs as such were not accorded any specific status by the administration. Beginning in 1953, bills designed to regularize the status of the chiefs were submitted by Mossi delegates to the Assembly of the French Union and to various other organs of the French Union, but to no effect. The Mossi chiefs meanwhile sought to define their own position. In 1952, under the leadership of the Mogho Naba, they formed an organization called the Union of the Traditional Chiefs of the Upper Volta. Article IV of the statutes which they filed with the territorial administration reads as follows:

[post-world war II period]

The present Union has as its aims:

1. To establish an alliance and effective solidarity among its members, and to defend their material and moral interests in the face of all difficulties;
2. To collaborate closely with the economic and social aims of the French administration;
3. To provide aid to the dependents, wives or minor children, of all deceased members of the society. This aid will be obtained:
   a. by drawing from a special reserve fund;
   b. by contributions from all members; and
   c. by an additional subscription according to the circumstances. The total sum to be granted to each family will be set at the annual meetings of the general assembly.

This organization decided to meet annually in Ouagadougou, Ouahigouya, Tenkodogo, and Koudougou. Member chiefs were to be notified of meetings through the existing traditional political hierarchies. Those chiefs who were unable to attend meetings could send a representative.[24]

Both the politicians and the French administration welcomed the formation of the Union. The politicians saw it as a forum that would support them in elections and to which they could report on their activities on behalf of their constituents. The French officials welcomed the opportunity to meet periodically with the chiefs and to obtain their help and support for official plans and projects.

One of the new administrative policies was to increase the number of administrative units (the cercles, subdivisions, and postes), and to staff them with European civil servants. Mossi country was given one civil servant for every thousand inhabitants. These officials were thus less isolated from the central administration and more directly responsible to their superiors for the areas under their command. Most of them were assisted by young African civil servants, both Mossi and non-Mossi, who kept administrative records, worked in the agricultural extension programs, acted as interpreters and court assessors, and so on. In addition to these administrative assistants, there were usually junior civil servants who were stationed at the homes of the district chiefs. They were called "secretaries," but they actually served as liaison officers between the administrators and the chiefs. Thus the administrators notified the district chiefs through these secretaries that certain taxes were being levied, and would be collected on a specific date; that certain laws affecting them had been passed; that an election would be held on a certain date; or that they should summon the potential draftees in their district to be examined at a certain time.

The postwar administrators did much more than communicate with the district chiefs through their secretaries. They still had considerable author-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[post-world war II period]

ity in local matters, even though the Indigénat had been abolished. They adjudicated minor offenses committed in their territories or referred to them on appeal by the districts and villages. They attempted to settle family quarrels and commercial cases, and ordered that restitution be made in cases of theft. However, they had to send any difficult case or major crime up the hierarchy until it reached the officials authorized to deal with it.

The French administrators also continued to act as intermediaries between the large commercial enterprises in Ouagadougou who wished to recruit men for labor or to buy local produce and enterprises in the larger Mossi towns. Thus, if a private firm in Ouagadougou wanted men to work on the roads, it asked the *chef de poste* (administrator) of a region to tell the district chiefs that its representatives would come to recruit men on a certain date. If a large business was planning to canvass a certain area in order to buy shea nuts, it asked the local administrators to notify the chiefs. No one was ever quite certain whether these activities were legal, but no one questioned them. The *chefs de poste* might simply have been giving the people information that they could not have obtained by any other means.

The Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, like the supreme chiefs of the other Mossi regions, continued to perform both the administrative role assigned to him by the colonial government and his traditional politico-ceremonial role. He was partly responsible, through his active cooperation with the administration, for the rapidity with which the Upper Volta became a functioning entity. For example, in his anxiety to make his capital worthy of being the territory's administrative center, he gave his full support to the extension of the Abidjan-Bobo-Dioulasso railroad to Ouagadougou. But he always succeeded in giving the impression (to foreigners at least) of detachment and dissociation from the French administration. His behavior was quite different when he functioned as Mogho Naba of the Ouagadougou Mossi. The following is a brief description of a visit he made to one of the districts:

> The Mogho Naba arrived unexpectedly at the district chief's headquarters, where no preparations had been made for his visit. It appears that he was on a tour of his domains to consult with the local chiefs about the forthcoming elections, and had simply dropped in to visit the district chief. However, as soon as his presence became known around the district, important village chiefs and the heads of lineages all put on their robes and appeared to pay homage to him. Meanwhile, he was consulting with his host. But as soon as the conversation was over he came out into the compound, where he was saluted by the chief's Bendere, who praised the royal ancestors by reciting